

TUNBRIDGE WELLS AND RUSTHALL COMMONS. A HABITAT SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons was visited by Joyce Pitt, in the company of the Site Warden, Steven Budden, on three occasions during 2003 – 24th October, 6th November and 19th November.

The visits were made in connection with the updating of the Management Plan for Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Common, originally written by the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation (now Kent Wildlife Trust) for the Conservators in 1992.

The last comprehensive botanical and habitat survey of both Commons was undertaken in 1991 and formed the basis of advice given in the 1992 management plan. This survey, whilst not comprehensive, was designed to update information on habitats and type of management work undertaken during the last ten years. To this end, the site visits concentrated on looking at those areas where significant changes have occurred, or where the Site Warden required specific advice.

A list of species recorded during the survey have been included within Appendix 4. It should not be viewed as being comprehensive.

There are a number of ponds within both Commons. These were not looked at during this survey. They were visited by Sue Young and Lee Brady in 2004. A copy of their survey report and management recommendations has been included within Appendix 5.

A series of Compartment maps for each Common are included at the end of the relevant section. They use the same base maps produced in 1991.

Tunbridge Wells Common

General Introduction

Tunbridge Wells Common was dominated by secondary woodland and scrub with areas of neutral grassland, relict areas of acid grassland, fragments of heathland and ponds. The natural climax woodland of oak, birch and ash had been invaded by sycamore, which was the dominant tree over much of Tunbridge Wells Common.

There were Victorian plantings of lime, beech and sycamore at strategic points.

Subsequent to the original botanical survey in 1991, much management work has been undertaken on the Common including the creation of a number of new paths, clearance of some of the secondary woodland, re-establishment of discrete areas of acid grassland and heathy vegetation and creation and management of ponds.

Compartment Descriptions

Compartment 1

A triangle bounded by Bishop's Down Road, Hurstwood Lane and Bishop's Down.

This area comprised storm-damaged secondary woodland dominated by sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and silver birch *Betula pendula* with the occasional mature oak *Quercus* sp.. There was a shrub layer of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, sycamore and birch saplings

Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. dominated the ground flora.

Since the 1991 survey there appeared to have been an increase in the amount of holly in the shrub layer. Gorse *Ulex europaeus* had also become established along the edges of the woodland.

Specific areas have been described in more detail below:

1a. Roadside strip of neutral grassland along the east side of Hurstwood Lane. Managed by mowing every two weeks (Steve Budden, pers. comm.); appeared to be slightly more herb-rich than in 1991.

1b & 1c. Two grassy glades had been created along the southern boundary of Bishop's Down Road. They contained occasional patches of rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, birch, yew *Taxus baccata* and holly.

These were managed by cutting every two years to remove encroaching bracken, etc. (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

1d. The verge opposite the Spa Hotel comprised good-quality, acid grassland with mature trees. Species recorded included red fescue *Festuca rubra*, mouse-ear hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*, and sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* as well as the mosses *Hypnum jutlandicum* and *Polytrichum juniperinum*.

The tree species included mature beech *Fagus sylvatica*, oak and sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*.

The verge was being managed by regular mowing (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

1e. Acid grassland that supported mouse-ear hawkweed. A good stand of gorse formed a margin to the woodland at the western end of Bishop's Down.

The grassland was managed by regular mowing (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Compartment 2

A triangle bounded by Fir Tree Road, Major York's Road and Bishop's Down.

This compartment comprised secondary woodland dominated by birch, oak and sycamore over bramble and bracken, as well as wood pasture with bracken, and relict heathland.

Management undertaken since 1991 had established and maintained several large, open areas and glades with occasional large oak, hawthorn and bramble. Bracken was being controlled by crushing annually in July (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

This compartment has been divided into five sub-compartments:

2a. A new glade that had been established by clearance and scraping the bracken litter. Patches of acid grassland were developing with species such as sheep's sorrel, pill sedge *Carex pilulifera*, sheep's fescue and red fescue. Masses of tiny silver birch seedlings were starting to regenerate.

2b. A bank that was dominated by bracken, with occasional silver birch and sycamore saplings.

2c. A large, grassy glade that had been considerably extended since the original 1991 survey. The grassland supported species such as sheep's sorrel, pill sedge and red fescue. The occasional oak and hawthorn had been retained.

Bracken and bramble were present around the boundaries of this sub-compartment and were intruding into the grassland.

2d. Most of the compartment was still occupied by secondary woodland dominated by sycamore, birch and oak with holly and bracken. Much dead wood was present.

A number of paths had been cut through the area and steps had been constructed down the slope to a pond.

2e. A pond that was silted up in 1991 had subsequently been desilted and the surrounding area cleared of trees and scrub (Steve Budden, pers. comm.). At the time

of the 2003 survey, it was a mosaic of damp acid-to-neutral grassland with compact rush *Juncus conglomeratus* and soft rush *Juncus effusus*, etc.

The pond itself supported a number of aquatic species that included bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* and the highly invasive non-native plant parrot's-feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum*. Other aquatic plant species included broadleaved pondweed *Potamogeton natans*, bulrush *Typha latifolia*, sweet-grass *Glyceria* sp., and hard rush *Juncus inflexus*.

Compartment 3

A small triangle of secondary woodland, acid grassland and neutral grass.

This compartment has been divided into three sub-compartments:

3a. The bulk of Compartment 3 was occupied by secondary woodland dominated by sycamore with oak, birch, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, goat willow *Salix caprea*, holly and hawthorn.

Management post-1991 has involved widening the paths, which are cut and maintained annually (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

3b. A small triangle of neutral grassland that had been planted recently with hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*.

The grassland was being managed by mowing regularly (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

3c. A dry, acid, grassland bank was present along the southwestern boundary of the woodland. Plants recorded included sheep's sorrel and heath bedstraw.

Compartment 4

Dense, secondary woodland with much sycamore, birch, young oak and holly, and a dense ground cover of bramble and bracken.

Beech saplings and occasional mature beech trees were established along the race track and occasionally elsewhere. Old mature oaks were scattered along the race track and along the western boundary of the woodland.

The southwestern boundary of Major York's Road had a good woodland edge with tall silver birch, Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, ash and sycamore.

A particular feature of the woodland within this compartment were the large, dense holly thickets.

A number of paths have been created post-1991 and are managed annually (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Four sub-communities were identified:

4a. A large area that had been cleared. At the time of the 2003 survey, it was dominated by bracken with occasional bramble, rose *Rosa* sp., young gorse and rosebay willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium*. Other species recorded included pill sedge and fescues.

This area was rotovated in 2003 (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

4b. The pond was dug out and enlarged in about 1995 (Steve Budden, pers. comm.). Species recorded during the current survey included branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, yellow iris, great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, bulrush, purple-loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* and remote sedge *Carex remota*.

The open area above the pond has also been enlarged since 1991 and was a mosaic of grassland and bracken. It was very marshy along the streamlet and supported species such as various rushes, lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis*, brooklime *Veronica beccabunga* and sweet-grass *Glyceria* sp.

4c. The race track has been widened slightly since 1991. Acid grassland banks at the northwestern end of the track supported a diversity of acid-loving plants and bryophytes.

The race track is managed by mowing twice a year (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

4d. The road verge along Hungershall Road was known to support a number of interesting plant species such as twayblade *Listera ovata*. These were not recorded during 2003, although this is not surprising as the survey was carried out late in the year.

This verge used to be mown by the local authority. The situation in 2003 is that the verge was being flailed twice a year (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Compartment 5

A large compartment bounded by Hungershall Park, Major York's Road, Eridge Road, and the western boundary of the Common.

This compartment was mainly occupied by secondary woodland dominated by birch and sycamore with an understorey of dense holly, bracken and bramble.

Occasional mature oaks were present, particularly to the south and southwest with young oaks and saplings scattered throughout. Hawthorn, young beech and rowan were occasional.

A number of glades had been established within the area post-1991, particularly in the parts where relict fragments of ling *Calluna vulgaris* and purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* were recorded in 1991, and where accidental fires have cleared woodland.

Specific areas have been described in more detail below:

5a. Following an accidental fire, this area was now a large, south-facing glade fringed by large oaks. The regenerating bracken had been managed by crushing for two-three years prior to 2003, the resultant bracken litter being removed (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Species recorded during the current survey included ling, pill sedge, sheep's sorrel, wavy hair-grass and sheep's fescue.

5b. An area that was cleared in about 1993 (Steve Budden, pers. comm.). It was a mosaic of ling, purple moor-grass, wavy hair-grass and sheep's fescue, with large amounts of bracken. Bramble was beginning to intrude.

Part of the area had not been managed since the original clearance. Aside from some overgrown ling, and dense gorse, it had developed into a mosaic of dense bramble and young silver birch, with some young oak saplings and rowan. Western gorse *Ulex gallii* has been recorded from the area by the current surveyor, but was not seen during this survey.

5c. This area was cleared of secondary woodland and scrub post-1991 (Steve Budden, pers. comm.). Mature oak and birch trees were retained, leading to the development of wood pasture, with acid grassland. Bracken occurred around the margins.

This area was being maintained by cutting and clearing annually (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

5d. A newly created glade. A few standard trees, including oak, ash and birch had been left within the glade. The ground flora had not developed at the time of the survey, but bramble, nettle, birch seedlings, and ferns were scattered across the area.

As part of the clearance work, a new pond had been excavated on the site of an old pond (Steve Budden, pers. comm.). It was dry at the time of the survey, but was

developing a flora of soft rush *Juncus effusus*, bulbous rush *Juncus bulbosus*, willowherbs *Epilobium* spp. and common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*.

5e. A small area dominated by tall hollies. The large small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* that was recorded here in 1991 was dead.

5f. An area of rough, rank neutral grassland that was dominated by Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* and cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* grasses with docks *Rumex* spp., and common nettle. Bramble was beginning to intrude into the area.

An area of regularly mown grass, with both native and non-native trees adjoined the car park.

5g. Brighton Pond. A shallow, well-lit pond surrounded by a low stone edge. Broadleaved pondweed *Potamogeton natans* was the most abundant aquatic water plant recorded. Marginal species included rushes *Juncus* spp., gypsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* and pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*.

The bank above the northern margin of Brighton Pond was cleared and a grassy path established post-1991 (Steve Budden, pers. comm.). The bank and path supported a number of species including wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia*, fescues *Festuca* spp., sallow *Salix caprea*, gorse and the occasional young oak.

There was no evidence of the creeping willow *Salix repens* that was recorded near the steps up from the pond in 1991.

Regularly mown amenity grass was present on the southern side of the pond.

Path A-B. Widened post-1991, particularly at the southern end, where it had become obliterated by dense scrub and woodland (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Slender St. John's-wort *Hypericum pulchrum* and wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* were recorded growing along the margins.

Path C-D. A south-facing bank and ditch along the northern edge of this path was found to support a range of species such as wavy hair-grass, *Cladonia* lichens, heath bedstraw, wood sage and acid-loving bryophytes.

It was blocked at both ends to prevent vehicle use and management consists of an annual cut (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Path E-F - Terrace Walk. Neutral grassland. Widened post-1991 (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

The northern edge of the path had been scalloped and had developed into a series of acid, grassy mounds with richer neutral grassland in the hollows between. A diversity of acid-loving plants such as wavy hair-grass, pill sedge and ling as well as the mosses *Polytrichum juniperium* and *Hypnum jutlandicum* and *Cladonia* lichens were noted on the mounds.

English elm scrub was present on both sides of the path below the Pantiles car park.

The coralroot bittercress *Cardamine bulbifera* colony recorded at the western end of this path is reported to still be present, although the population may have declined in recent years (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Three new paths have been established through the southern part of the woodland below the Terrace path and are kept open by public use. All three were narrow and surrounded on either side by secondary woodland and scrub.

Compartment 6

A large compartment bounded by Mount Ephraim Road, Church Road, Castle Road, Major York's Road and Fir Tree Road.

This compartment comprised a mosaic of secondary woodland, scrub, acid grassland, neutral grassland and rocky outcrops.

It has been further divided into sixteen sub-compartments:

6a. A mosaic of species-poor neutral and acid grassland that has become less rank since the 1991 survey. Yorkshire fog and cock's-foot were present within the neutral grassland. The acid grassland was characterised by the presence of fescues, bents and sheep's sorrel.

There was a good scrub screen adjacent to Mount Ephraim Road that included gorse and oak standards and young oaks.

The grassland was maintained by an annual cut and clear (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

6b. A mosaic of enriched, rank, neutral grassland, acid grassland and scrub that was present in a parallel strip alongside Mount Ephraim Road.

The rank, neutral grassland included cock's-foot, Yorkshire fog, yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, common nettle and young bramble.

The thinner soils supported discrete areas of relict acid grassland, characterised by species such as sheep's sorrel, fescues, bents and early hair-grass.

Bracken, gorse and young oaks were intruding into this area from the adjacent wooded edge.

Large ant hills were present within the rank grassland and scrub.

Some recent management had been undertaken involving cutting and clearing the vegetation from around the anthills.

6c. An area of oak-dominated secondary woodland, with ivy and bramble beneath, edged with bracken, holly and gorse.

6d. Edgecombe Bowl and rocks. Large area below the south-facing rock outcrop was heavily scrubbed at the time of the 1991 survey. The central part had been cleared fairly recently prior to this survey and management involves an annual cut (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

The cleared area consisted of a mosaic of damp, neutral grassland and species associated with disturbance such as common nettle, thistles and hogweed were colonising the most recently cleared ground.

Common spotted-orchids were present in the grassland.

The western edge of this area was a mosaic of scrub supporting species such as bramble and buddleja *Buddleja davidii*, with rosebay willowherb, cock's-foot, cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* and nettle.

The eastern side was a mosaic of hawthorn, bramble and secondary woodland with mature sycamore and the occasional young beech.

The rocks themselves had been exposed by cutting and clearing back the invading sycamore and bramble. Patches of bramble, wood sage, and common ferns were present in the crevices.

6e. Dense woodland that comprised a mosaic of tall, even-aged, spindly birch with sycamore and ivy below, with discrete areas of semi-climax dense hawthorn below the Edgecombe Hotel, and additional areas with young oaks, birch and occasional mature oak standard. A number of fallen trees were noted.

6f. An area of wood pasture with standard oaks over grassland and scattered bracken, gorse and bramble around the margins. This area is cut and cleared twice a year (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

6g. A large expanse of open, thin, species-poor acid grassland that was dominated by common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and fescues. Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens* and early hair-grass were occasional.

A small colony of mat-grass *Nardus stricta* occurred on the thinnest sandy soils with harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*.

Anthills were present throughout this area.

Gorse, young oak and birch were encroaching at the northeastern end.

6h. An area of relict heath with ling and occasional purple moor-grass. Since 1991, this area has been expanded by scraping the ground around the original area and laying cut stems of ling directly on the bare ground (Steve Budden, pers. comm.). New ling plants were recorded with sheep's fescue and pill sedge seedlings.

6i. Mainly enriched rank, neutral grassland with relict acid grassland patches, which was being invaded by birch and oak scrub.

6j. An open area created by accidental burning. Following the fire, the ground was scraped and ling cuttings from Ashdown Forest were laid over the bare ground (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Young ling, gorse, purple moor-grass and patches of the acid-loving moss *Polytrichum juniperinum* were recorded across the area. Vast quantities of birch seedlings were also present.

The lower part of the glade to the south was damper with rushes and more purple moor-grass and less birch regeneration. Some willow seedlings were recorded.

6k. A large area of badly storm-damaged woodland that was generally densely scrubbed with young oaks, holly, sycamore and birch. Bracken was locally common. There were several fairly open places in the eastern section with good oaks and less sycamore. Rowan was occasional. The secondary woodland in the western section had less oak regeneration and here, birch and sycamore were more dominant with holly, bramble and bracken below.

Work since 1991 has included creating a network of new paths and widening existing paths (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

6l. An area of relict acid grassland with large ant hills that was dominated by common bent, fiddle dock *Rumex pulcher* and sheep's sorrel. Yorkshire fog and cock's-foot was present along the southern edge.

There were a few newly planted young oaks.

Some of the grassland was becoming colonised by woody species.

Management has involved cutting and clearing this area three times over a six year period (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

6m. Regularly mown amenity grassland that had limited habitat interest at the time of the survey.

6n. A large clearing created through accidental burning. Following the fire, the ground was scraped bare and ling heather from Ashdown Forest was spread over the bare ground.

At the time of the survey it had developed a mosaic of young ling heather, pill sedge, common bent, sheep's fescue and purple moor-grass with occasional bramble. Purple moor-grass was noticed to be dominant at the lowest end, where the ground was damper.

Bracken and gorse was just beginning to intrude into the open area.

6o. An area of previously cleared woodland that had been rotovated (Steve Budden, pers. comm.). It was dominated by bracken with patches of bramble. Heather occurred rarely.

6p. Cricket ground and immediate surrounds. The grassland around the edge of the cricket pitch is cut and cleared occasionally (Steve Budden, pers. comm.) and it has become less rank since 1991, with finer grasses such as the fescues and common bent becoming more frequent, although Yorkshire fog and cock's-foot still occurred.

The cricket ground itself was tightly mown acid grassland with bents and fescues.

Compartment 7

This compartment is bounded by Edgecombe Road, London Road and Castle Road.

It comprised a mosaic of secondary woodland, acid grassland, neutral grassland and scrub.

This compartment has been divided into five sub-compartments:

7a. The bulk of this compartment comprised storm-damaged woodland that has developed into oak, birch and sycamore woodland over dense holly, hawthorn and bramble with the occasional young beech. A number of large oak and birch bordered Edgecombe Road.

Work undertaken post-1991 here has involved the creation of a number of new paths and widening the original paths. Paths are managed by cutting/flailing twice a year (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

7b. Area of acid grassland dominated by *Agrostis capillaris* and red fescue that is being invaded by bramble and young oaks.

7c. An area that was identified as acid grassland with ant hills in 1991. At the time of the current survey the area had been invaded by a mix of bramble, gorse and young oak and birch saplings and should now be categorised as wood pasture.

Several of the paths have been widened significantly post-1991 and are managed by cutting annually (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

7d. A band of rough, neutral grassland with bramble, oaks and sycamore was present along the edge of London Road.

7e. An area of mown amenity grassland of limited habitat / botanical interest.

Compartment 8

This compartment is bounded by Church Road, London Road, Edgecombe Road and Castle Road.

It comprised an area of High Forest, secondary woodland and neutral grassland.

This compartment has been divided into five sub-compartments:

8a. In 1991 this area was identified as being dense bracken and bramble. It has since been opened up and, at the time of the current survey, was a mosaic of bracken, bramble and neutral grassland with Yorkshire fog and cock's-foot. Broadleaved flowering plants included common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*.

8b. A south-facing neutral grassland bank, with a range of species that included false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, cock's-foot, ribwort plantain, common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, and buttercups *Ranunculus* spp.

Management involves an annual cut (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

8c. Lower Cricket Ground. Comprised regularly mown amenity grassland of limited habitat / botanical interest.

8d. Dense woodland with oak, birch, hawthorn and holly and a ground cover of ivy and bramble.

A line of mature horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*, beech, oak and birch was present along the northern edge.

8e. A small area of mown amenity grassland of limited habitat interest.

Compartment 9

This compartment comprises two triangle of land bounded by Mount Ephraim Road, London Road and Church Road.

It was a mosaic of acid grassland, neutral grassland, amenity grassland, rocks and scrub and secondary woodland.

This compartment has been divided into eleven sub-compartments:

9a. Grassland area with a mosaic of acid and neutral grassland that supported species such as fescues, common bent and yarrow. The neutral grassland was limited to the verge edges.

Management of this area involves cutting and clearing every two weeks (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

9b. An area of rocks that supported gorse and bramble.

Three pines, planted three years ago, were present on the top of the cliff.

9c. An area of rank, acid grassland was dominated by bents and fescues. At the time of the survey this area was unmanaged.

9d. A mosaic of unmanaged, acid-neutral grassland with ant hills.

9e. In 1991 this area was dominated by bracken. This was cleared sometime prior to 2003 and, at the time of the survey had developed a mosaic of acid grassland, bracken and gorse.

9f. In 1991 this area was dominated by bracken. At the time of the survey this area was being managed by cutting and crushing the bracken (Steve Budden, pers. comm.) and was developing a mosaic of acid and neutral grassland with some bracken and bramble regeneration.

A belt of gorse, oaks and broom had been retained near the houses.

9g. Similar to 9f, this was a mosaic of acid and neutral grassland with the occasional standing birch and pine, etc.

Management has involved cutting and crushing the bracken for three consecutive years prior to 2003. It was now being cut and cleared annually (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

9h. Rocky outcrops with acid grassland that became much more enriched and ranker east of the drive to Gibraltar Cottage.

There were large intrusions of bramble.

9i. A south-facing hollow with rocks and dense growth of bramble and a number of small oak, sycamore saplings, rosebay willowherb, etc.

A colony of Japanese knotweed was being managed to keep it under control (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

9j. An area of mown amenity grassland that was being managed by mowing every two weeks (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

9k. A small area of acid grassland that supported a variety of small herbs such as common stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium*, buck's-horn plantain *Plantago coronopus*, early hair-grass *Aira praecox*.

At the time of the survey, this area was being mown on a regular basis by the owners of St. Helena.

Road Verges

Worthy of particular note were the road verges on the corners of the road junctions between Major York's Road, Hungershall Park and Fir Tree Road.

These comprised herb-rich neutral – acid grassland with a range of species that included meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*,

glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and wood-sedge *Carex sylvatica*.

At the time of the 1991 survey, these verges were being managed as site lines by the local authority. By 2003, management had become the responsibility of the Commons Conservators and are cut and cleared annually in July.

Rusthall Common

General Introduction

Rusthall Common comprised varied aged secondary woodland with occasional relict mature pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, scrub, discrete areas of both acid and neutral grassland, rocky outcrops and several small ponds.

A feature of Rusthall Common are the number of hollows, which are now submerged in dense, secondary woodland.

The alien shrub cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* has intruded into parts of the Common from adjoining properties.

A section of Rusthall Common, surrounding the rock outcrops known as Toad Rock and Bull Hollow, has been designated as a Site of Scientific Interest and was excluded from the survey.

Compartment Descriptions

Compartment 1

Two small areas north of Rusthall Road, either side of Lower Green Road, that comprised semi-improved grassland with planted amenity trees, and a belt of trees and scrub.

Much of the grassland was enriched and of low wildlife interest. The dampest areas were more herb-rich with cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*, oval sedge *Carex ovalis* and rush species *Juncus* spp.

There was a belt of pedunculate oak, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, elder *Sambucus nigra* and gorse *Ulex europaeus* along a dry bank.

At the time of the survey, the grassland was mown regularly at the request of the residents (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Compartment 2

The main area was bounded by Coach Road, Langton Road, Rusthall Road, Common View and the southwestern boundary of the Common itself.

This compartment has been divided into four sub-compartments:

2a. Secondary pedunculate oak woodland with areas of dense, overmature hawthorn scrub with holly *Ilex aquifolium*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., silver birch *Betula*

pendula and cherry laurel. There were a few scattered larger oaks in the southeast corner and to the southwest. Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* was locally common.

Sallow *Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia* and aspen *Populus tremula* were present in the shrub layer where the ground was damper.

A stand of mature turkey oak *Quercus cerris* marked the northern point of Compartment 2.

Tall ash *Fraxinus excelsior* standards dominated the Langton Road edge.

A belt of young sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* was present along the edge of the wooded area facing Common View. Sycamore seedlings were intruding into the adjacent mown grassland.

Since the original survey in 1991, the existing paths have been widened and are regularly managed.

2b. A rough grassland area with occasional scrub patches and developing ant hills was a mosaic of species-poor acid and neutral grassland.

Hawthorn and bramble scrub was intruding into the grassland from the adjacent woodland edge.

Part of the grassland was mown regularly and managed as a childrens' play area.

A new hedge had been planted at the northern end of Common View to conceal the bottle bank.

2c. An area of rank neutral/acid grassland with ant hills was enclosed in a hollow within the wooded area (2b). Fescues *Festuca* spp., common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* were recorded with broadleaved flowering plants such as tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and lesser stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*.

Sallow, gorse and young pedunculate oak were intruding into the grassland from the adjacent dense scrub and secondary woodland. Bracken was locally common.

Steps have been constructed down into this grassland from the wooded area to the south and the grassland has been cut about three times in past ten years (Steve Budden, pers. comm).

Two ponds were present within the grassland. The smaller pond had been deepened and lined and apparently normally retains some water (Steve Budden, pers. comm.) but was dry at the time of visit. Only creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and rushes *Juncus* spp. were recorded.

The large pond had been partially excavated and has retained water throughout the dry summer of 2003. Plants recorded included compact rush *Juncus conglomeratus*, soft rush, *Juncus effusus*, sweet-grass *Glyceria* sp., bulrush *Typha latifolia*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* and an abundance of the non-native and highly invasive aquatic plant parrot's-feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum*. This latter species was not present in 1991.

An excellent bank of gorse was present along the northern edge of this pond.

2d. A damp hollow at the southern end was filled with willow scrub and young ash and sycamore saplings.

At the time of the survey, the existing paths were regularly managed, and two extra paths had been opened up through the dense scrub from Coach Road.

Compartment 3

Located in the southwestern area of the Common, bounded by Langton Road, Tea Garden Lane and the western boundary of the Common.

Dense, closed canopy oak/ash woodland. The understorey was dominated by hawthorn with holly, wild cherry and bramble. The ground flora included dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, the occasional patch of bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and other common woodland plants.

The soils appeared to be slightly more base-rich than the rest of the common and there was very little bracken.

Tall ash lined Tea Garden Lane. A stand of scrubby wych elm *Ulmus glabra* was present along the southwestern boundary.

This compartment has been divided into three sub-compartments:

3a. An unmanaged, winter-wet hollow comprised dense, impenetrable secondary High Forest woodland with ivy *Hedera helix* below. Tree/scrub species included sycamore, yew *Taxus baccata*, hawthorn and birch. Soft shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum* was also recorded.

3b. High Forest secondary woodland with sycamore, ash, and oak over an understorey of young sycamore and pedunculate oak, holly, and bramble and hawthorn scrub. Ash dominated the roadsides.

The ground flora included a range of common herbs such as bluebell, wood avens *Geum urbanum*, false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum* and a variety of common ferns.

3c. A large hollow that was dominated by impenetrable closed canopy ash and sycamore trees, with ash saplings, holly, hawthorn and bramble in the understorey. Dog's mercury and common ferns occurred in the ground flora.

Compartment 4

Southern part of Rusthall Common, bounded by Tea Garden Lane, Langton Road and the southern boundary of the Common.

Comprised a mix of secondary woodland, acid grassland, neutral grassland, scrub and rocky outcrops.

This compartment has been further divided into ten sub-compartments:

4a. The main woodland area. Dominated by tall pedunculate oaks and many sycamore above a hawthorn and holly shrub layer. A number of excellent relict mature oak were scattered within the woodland and near the church. Several hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* and their progeny were also present in the woodland near the church.

Sycamore was particularly dominant with hawthorn in the northwestern part of this compartment. Ash became more common in the canopy towards the southwest and along Tea Garden Lane.

Management within this area has been limited to widening the existing paths which are edged now by holly and bramble (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

4b. A neutral grassland glade supporting a range of species that included cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis* and buttercups *Ranunculus* spp. A mosaic of grassland and hawthorn has been retained on the south-facing bank.

The grassland receives an annual cut in July and the arisings are removed (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

4c. A mosaic of grassland with scrub with occasional standards and silver birch. The ground flora included common ferns, violets, woodland grasses and sedges.

In the original 1991 botanical survey this area comprised dense scrub. It is now kept open by occasional mowing and clearing (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

4d. A hollow that comprised dense, unmanaged secondary woodland. Oaks of varied age were dominant in the canopy with a dense understorey of hawthorn, holly and bramble below. Stands of the invasive cherry laurel also occurred in addition to occasional yew, beech *Fagus sylvatica*, sycamore and ash saplings. The ground flora was dominated by ivy.

4e. A large, open, species-poor acid grassland glade on very thin, poor soils. Grass species were dominated by common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and fescues *Festuca* sp.. Early hair-grass *Aira praecox* was also recorded.

There were two large, mature oak and a dense thicket of young oak along the northern edge of the glade.

This area is managed by occasional cutting (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

4f. A south-facing glade above a rocky outcrop was a mosaic of acid grassland and bracken with occasional holly and birch regeneration.

4g. South-facing rocky outcrop above Happy Valley. In 1991 the rocks were covered by impenetrable secondary woodland. The rocks have now been exposed by massive scrub clearance work.

Young gorse, holly, common bent, sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia* were colonising the gaps between the rocks.

A line of mature beech, oak and cherry lined the southern boundary of the Common at the base of the rocky outcrop.

At the time of the survey this area was being managed by annual strimming (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

4h. An area of open woodland. Young oak, birch and holly, with bracken locally common in areas where the ground had been burnt. A number of mature hornbeam and hornbeam saplings were present at the northeastern end of this compartment.

Cherry laurel and sycamore are invading this area of woodland.

Occasional large sandstone rocks covered with bracken were present in this area.

4i. The rocky scarp in this area has been quarried in the past (Steve Budden, pers. comm.). In 1991 this area was dense, impenetrable holly and birch scrub with bracken and bramble.

Clearance at the western end has exposed the rocks, although there was some young gorse, birch and holly regeneration. Mature oak and beech trees had been retained.

Bracken was common at the base of the scarp.

This area has been cleared twice during the period 1991 – 2003 (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

4j. An area of dense, unmanaged, storm-damaged woodland that was dominated by holly with oak, birch and hazel coppice stools.

Compartment 5

This comprised a mosaic of secondary woodland, scrub, rough neutral and acid grassland, and rocks.

This compartment has been further divided into eleven sub-compartments:

5a. Secondary oak, sycamore, birch and ash woodland over old mature hawthorn and blackthorn scrub.

Post 1991, two new paths have been constructed through this woodland area (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

5b. This area once comprised dense scrub, but had been opened up, cleared and scraped of bracken litter. At the time of the 2003 survey, it was developing a grassy vegetation.

5c. A large hollow in the central part of the woodland was dominated in part by dense holly and hawthorn scrub. Young gorse was present along the edge of the hollow in places.

In 1991, there was a good colony of the notable plant, coralroot bittercress *Cardamine bulbifera* – no evidence of this plant was found in 2003.

Management of this area has included clearance work to open up the hollow, bracken control and removal of fallen timber (Steve Budden, pers. comm.). A pond has also been created (see 5e for further details).

5d. A dense patch of cherry laurel with many seedlings below.

5e. A new pond has been excavated in the dampest area of the hollow (5c) and supported sweet-grass *Glyceria* sp. and rushes *Juncus* spp. The banks were a mosaic of neutral grass, bracken and bramble.

5f. The eastern end of Compartment 5 comprised a large area of dense, mature, hawthorn scrub that was developing into birch, oak and holly secondary woodland.

5g. An area of acid grassland that supported a range of grasses and broadleaved flowering plants including fescues, wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, mouse-ear hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum* and harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*.

The grassland is managed by an annual cut (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

5h. Grassland area managed by an annual cut and clearance in July (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

5i. A small hollow that had been colonised by unmanaged, dense, sycamore and ash secondary woodland with a holly and hawthorn shrub layer.

5j. The former car park. At the time of the survey, this had developed into a mosaic of rough grassland with wasteland species in addition to those characteristic of more neutral-acid grassland. Good stands of common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* were a feature of this area. Some scattered young hawthorn scrub was also present.

5k. Cricket ground. Reasonable herb-rich acid grassland with sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, fescues, heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, oval sedge *Carex ovalis*, heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, tormentil, and bird's-foot-trefoil.

The cricket ground is mown regularly (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Path C-D. A narrow mown strip along its margin was colonised by bramble and bracken. A stand of English elm *Ulmus procera* scrub was present at the eastern end and a dense blackthorn thicket was present along the edge of path near the cricket ground. A colony of coralroot bittercress was recorded along this path in 1991, but none was located in 2003.

Path D-E. Tall elm scrub, with dead and moribund specimens, along with willow *Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*, occurred on both sides of the path.

Path F-G. A wide grassy path. Blackthorn and wild cherry were frequent at the northern end of the path.

Orpine *Sedum telephium* and wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* were recorded during 1991, but were not seen in 2003.

The path is managed by regular mowing (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

Path F-H. This path was surrounded by dense secondary woodland that included ash, oak, cherry-laurel, hawthorn, holly and bramble.

The two new earth paths cleared through the woodland were narrow and surrounded by dense scrub dominated by cherry-laurel.

Compartment 6

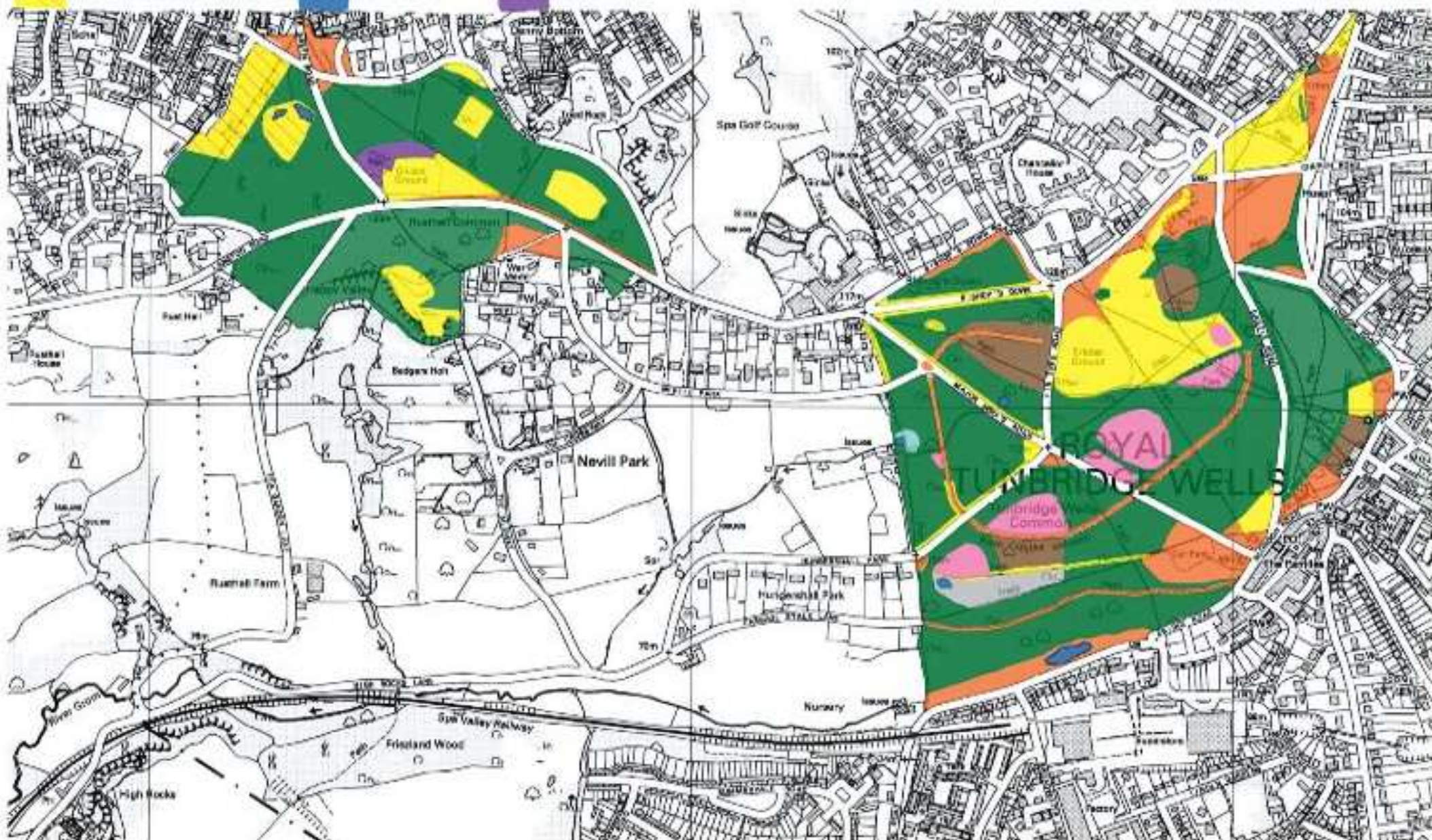
Comprises the Site of Special Scientific Interest. A cursory look revealed that the amount of bilberry above Toad Rock and Bull Hollow had increased since 1991. This is believed to be due to management work undertaken by the warden (Steve Budden, pers. comm.).

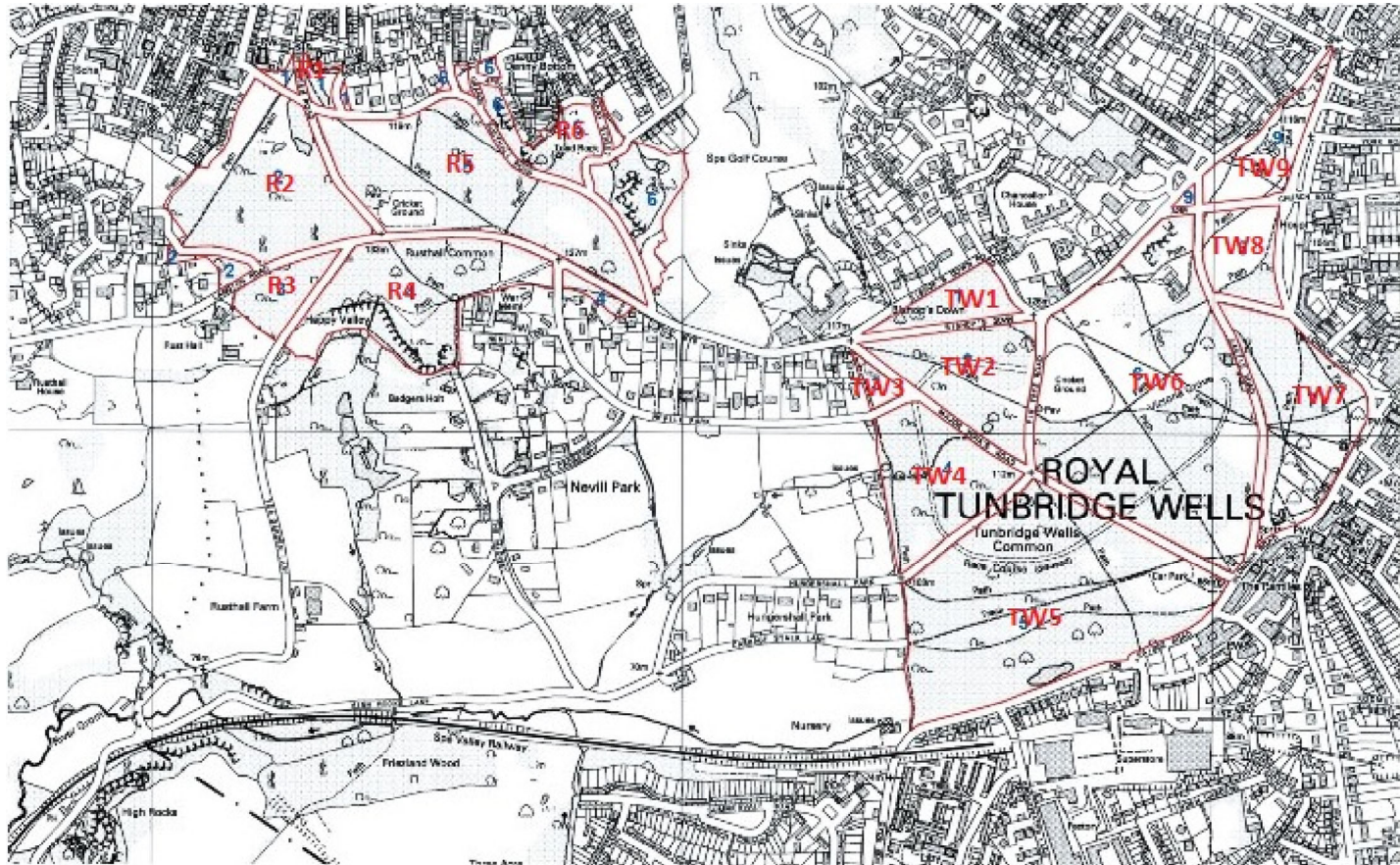
At the time of the survey, the climbing in Bull Hollow has been controlled, and the bryophyte flora (mosses and lichens) appeared to have recovered.

Appendix 3: Habitat Survey, 2003. Habitat Map, based on survey work undertaken by Joyce Pitt. Representation only. Do not scale.

Key

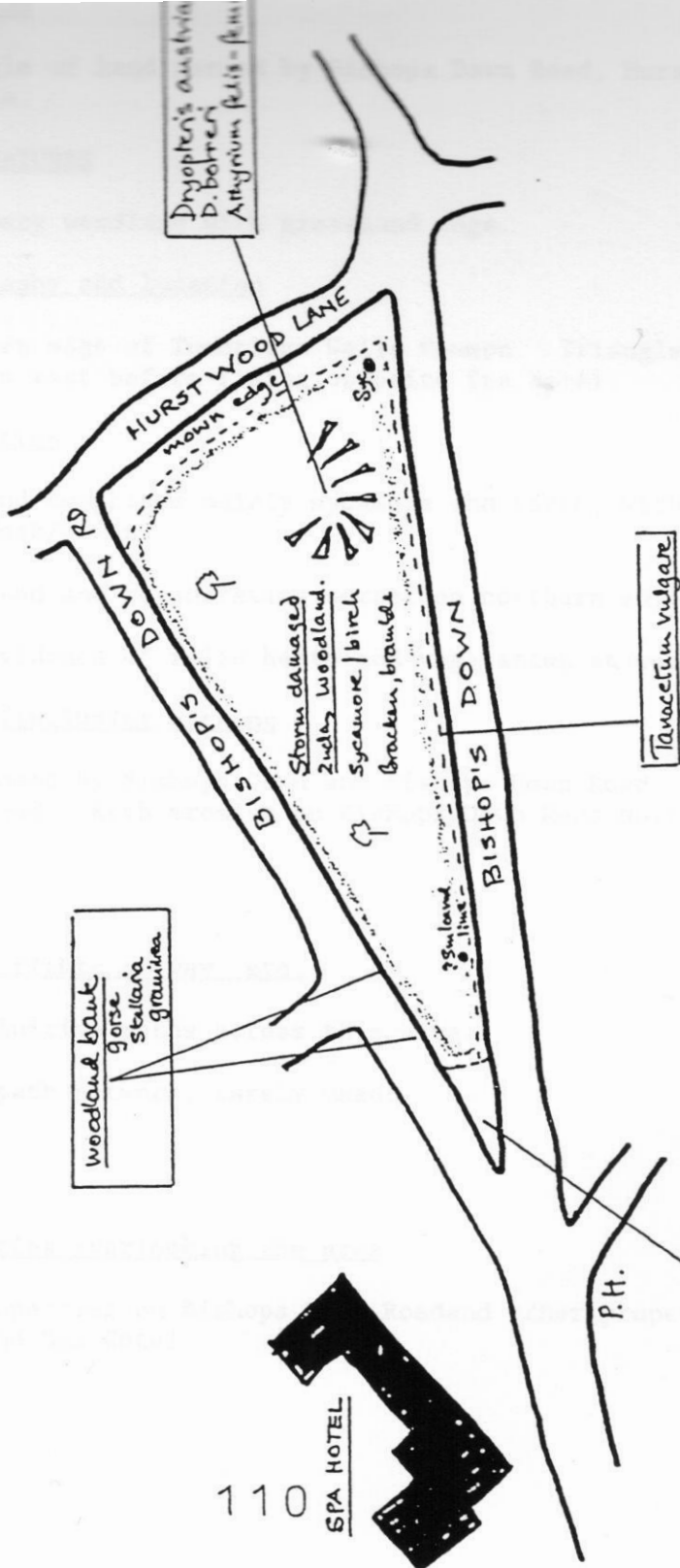
	Neutral grassland		Marshy grassland		Woodland and scrub		Bare ground
	acid grassland		Heathy vegetation		Wood pasture		
	acid / neutral grassland mosaic		Water bodies		Ruderal vegetation		





TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMON

AREA 1



110

SPA HOTEL

P.H.

Mown grass:
Rioselia officinarum
Trifolium micranthum

Tanacetum vulgare

Dyoptera's austria
D. bolteri
Athysanella felix = f. m.

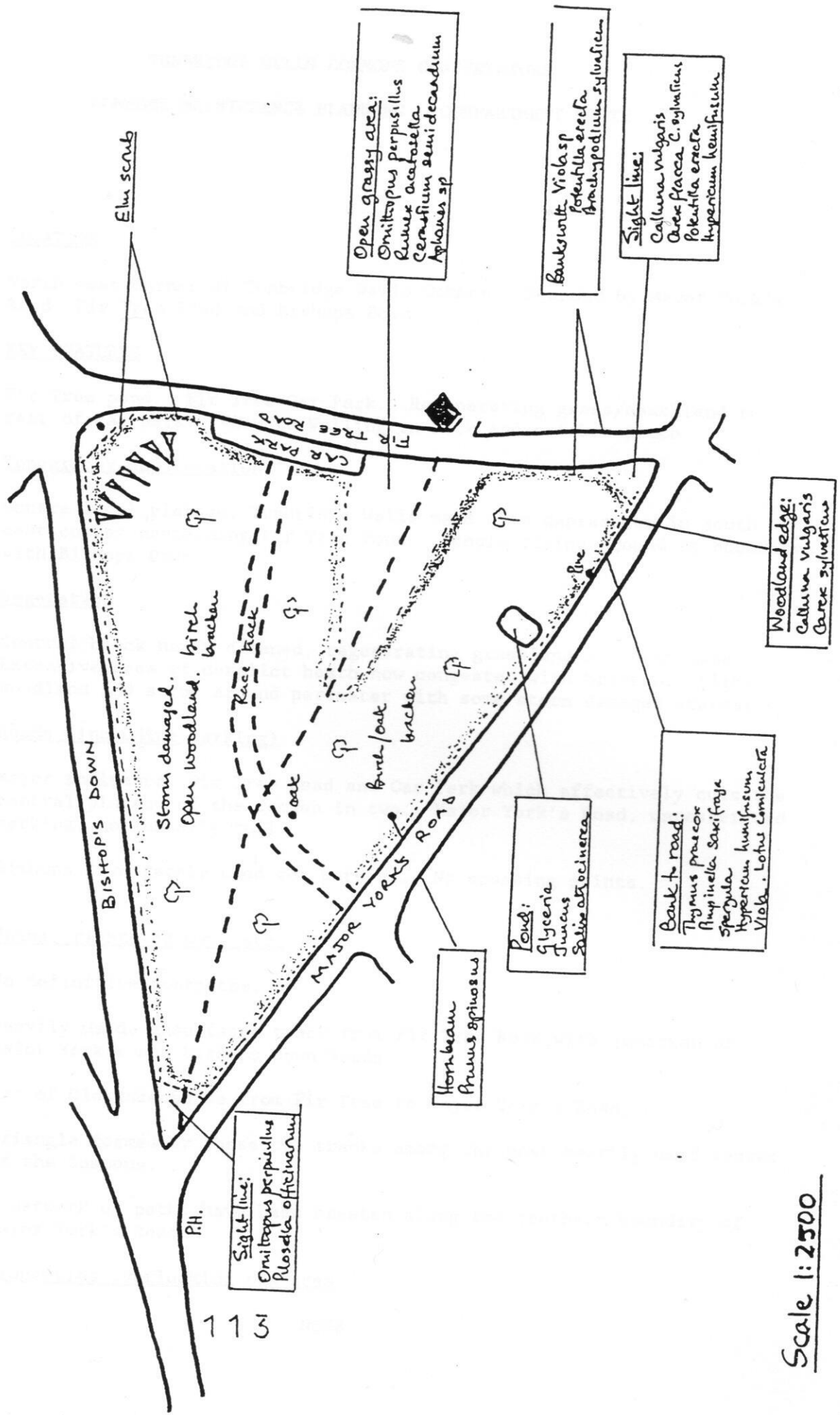
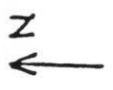
woodland bank
 gorse
 stellaria
 graminea

Storm damaged
 2ndly woodland.
 Sycamore, birch
 Bracken, bramble

Scale 1:2500

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMON

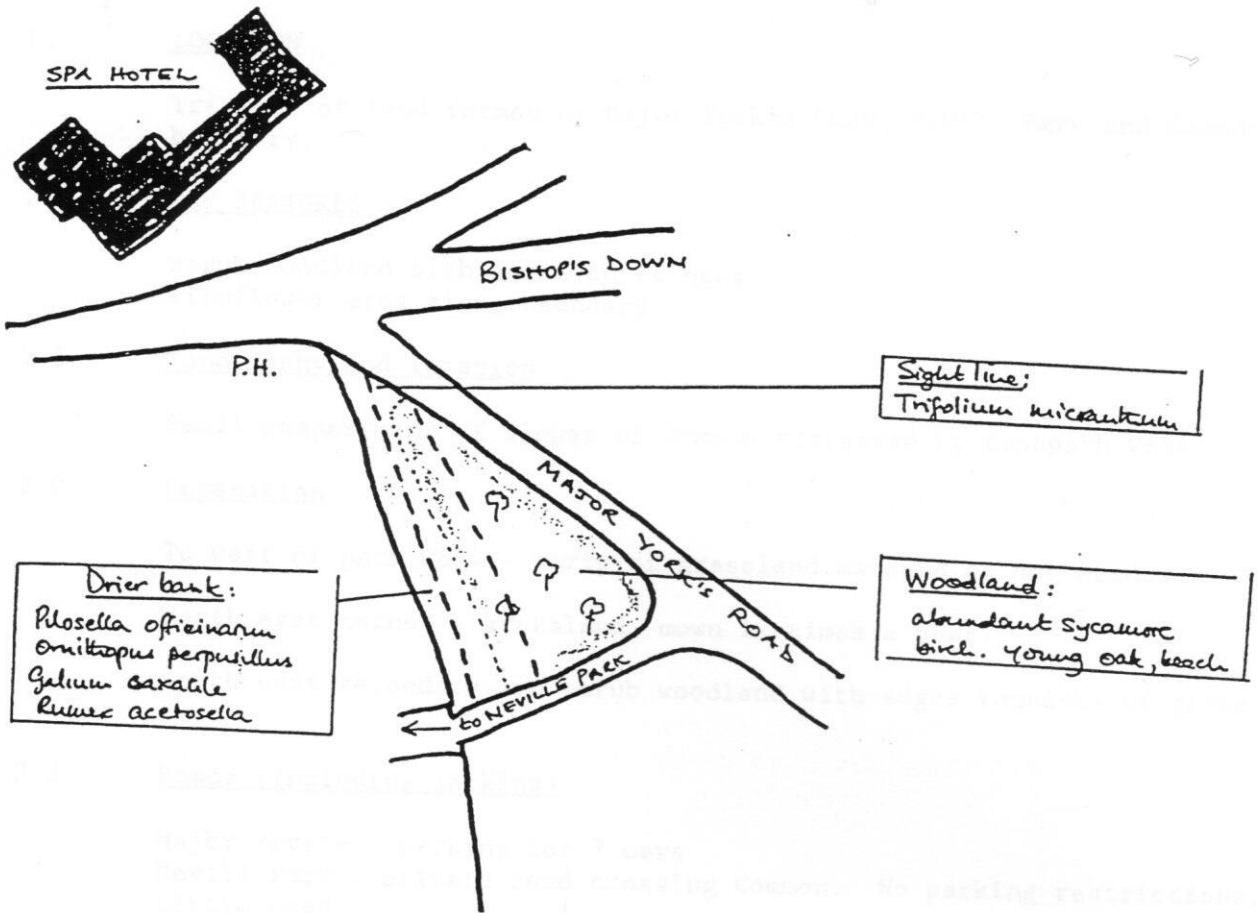
AREA 2



Scale 1:2500

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMON

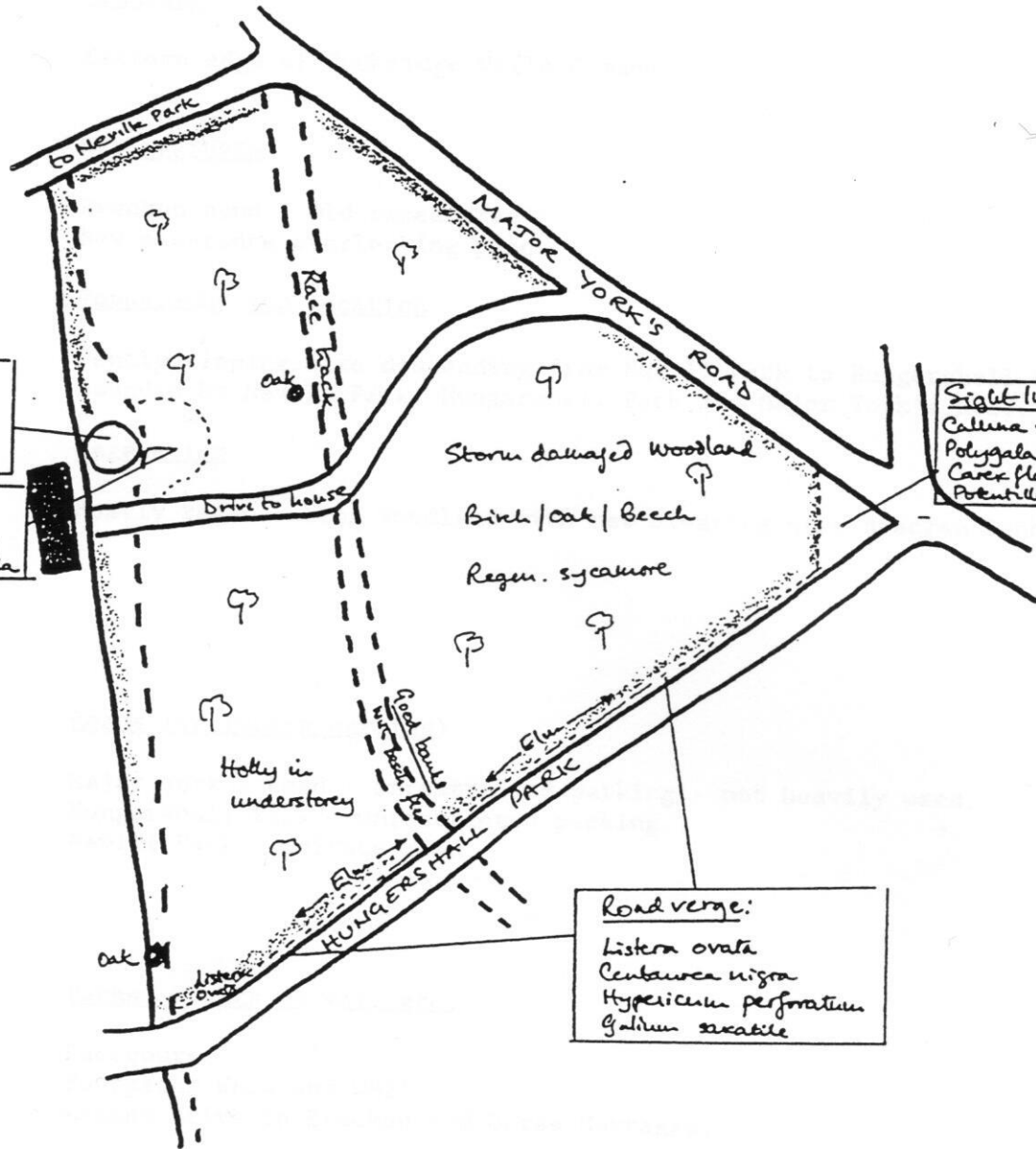
AREA 3



Scale 1:2500

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMON

AREA 4



- Pond:
Iris pseudacorus
Carex pendula
Epilobium hirsutum
- Stream:
Juncus effusus
Alopecurus geniculatus
Ranunculus flammula

- Slight lime:
Calluna vulgaris
Polygala vulgaris
Carex flacca
Potentilla erecta

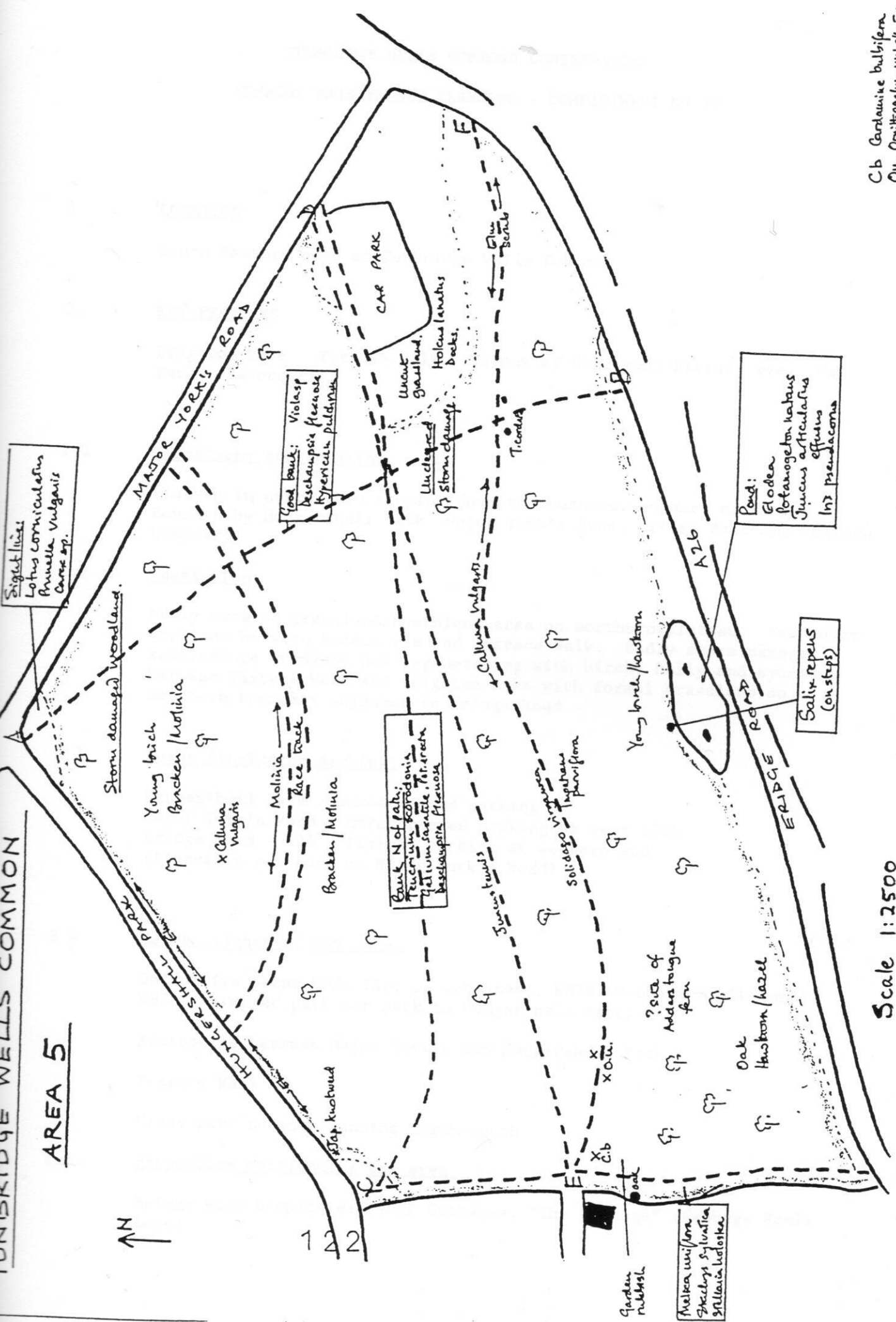
- Road verge:
Listera ovata
Centaurea nigra
Hypericum perforatum
Galium saxatile

Scale 1:2500

AREA 5



122



Scale 1:2500

Cb *Cardamine bulbifera*
 Ou *Oenothera lutea*
 A

Slight lines
Lotus corniculatus
Prunella vulgaris
Carex sp.

Good bank:
Viola sp.
Deschampsia flexuosa
Hypericum pulchrum

Bank N of path:
Festuca rubra
Galium aparine
Galium saxatile
Polygonum persicaria
Deschampsia flexuosa

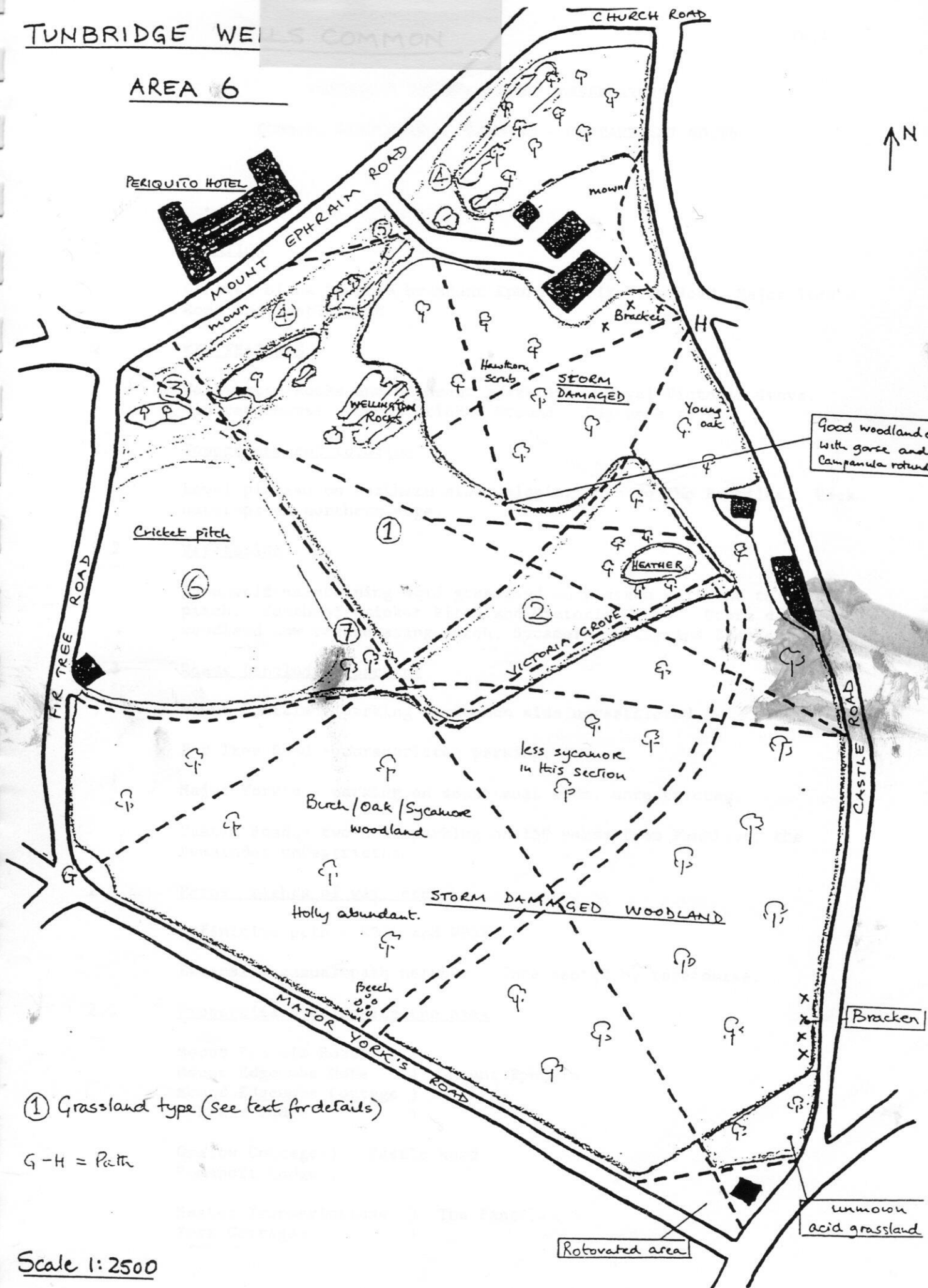
Pond:
Gloriosa
Potamogeton natans
Juncus articulatus
Iris pseudacorus

Salix repens
 (on steps)

Garden rubbish
Melica uniflora
Stachys sylvatica
Silene holostea

TUNBRIDGE WEI... COMMON

AREA 6



Good woodland with gorse and Campanula rotundifolia

Bracken

unknown acid grassland

Rotovated area

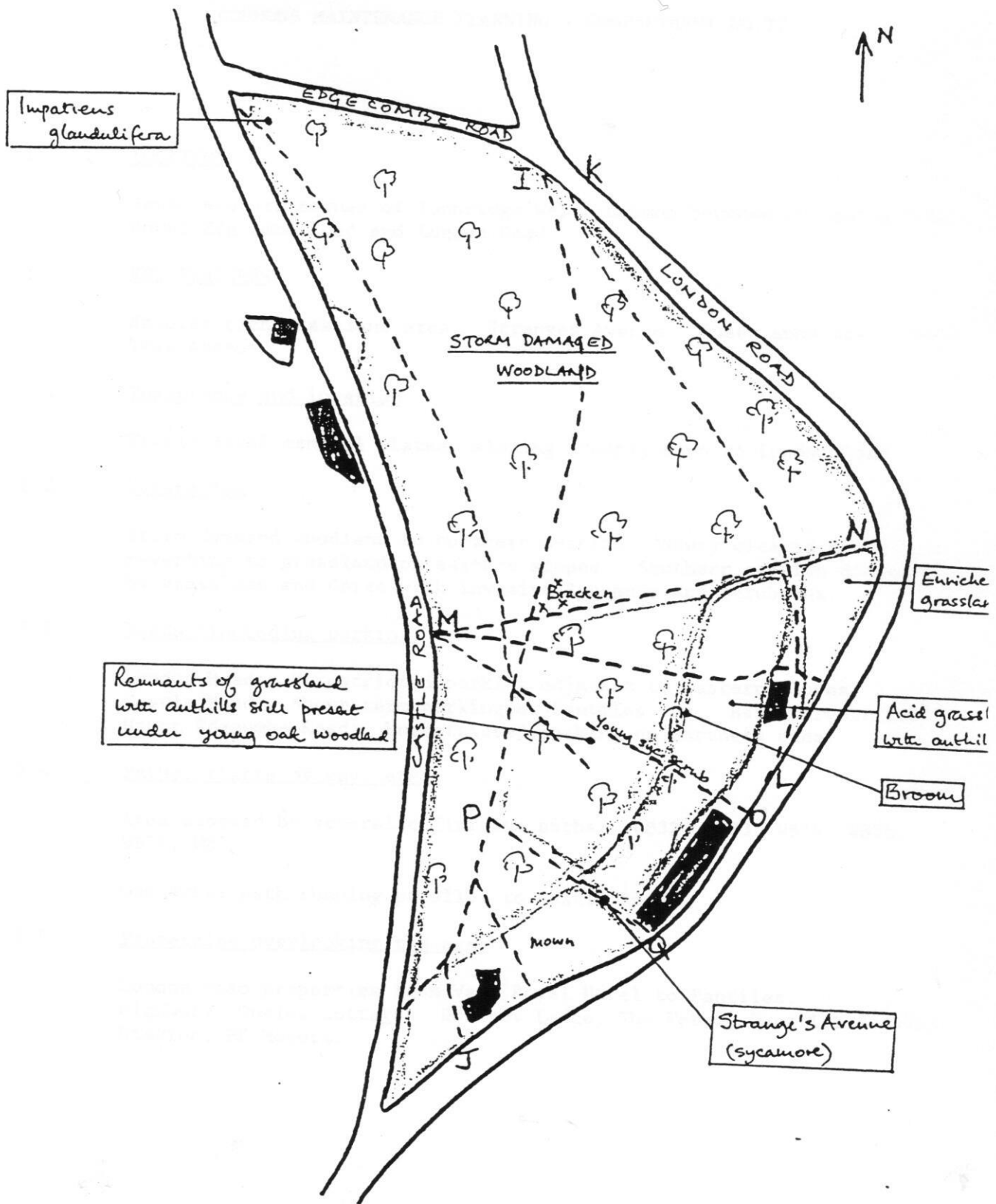
① Grassland type (see text for details)

G-H = Path

Scale 1:2500

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMON

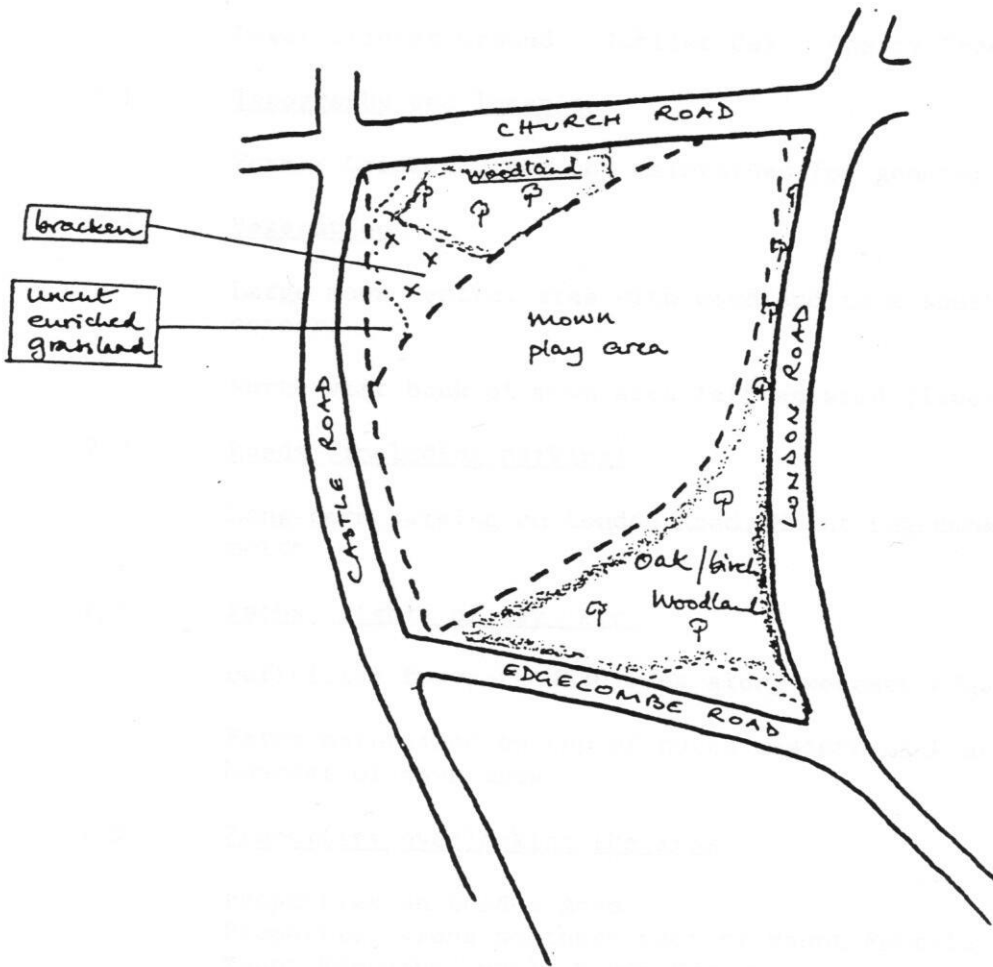
AREA 7



Scale 1:2500

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMON

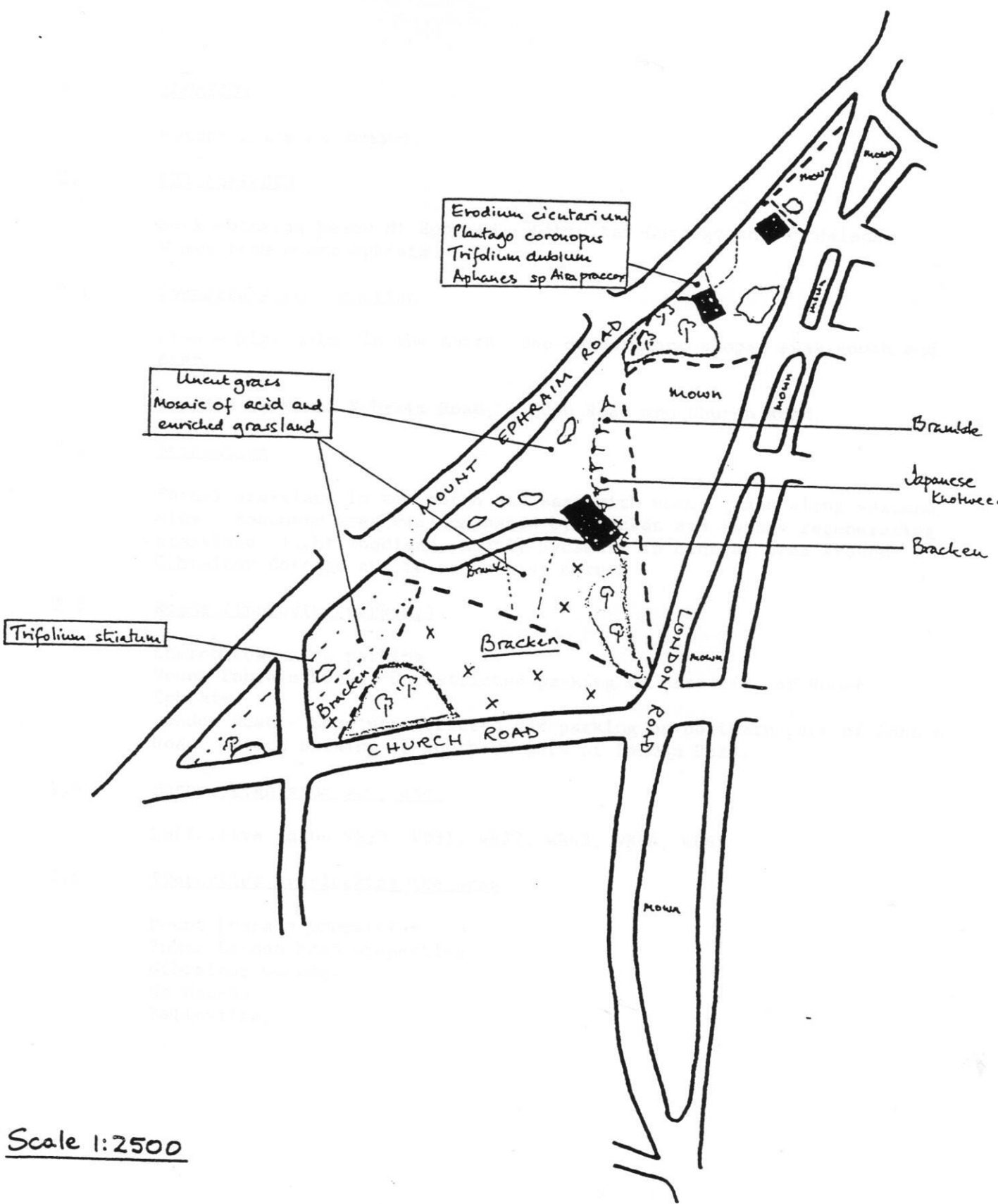
AREA 8



Scale 1:2500

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMON

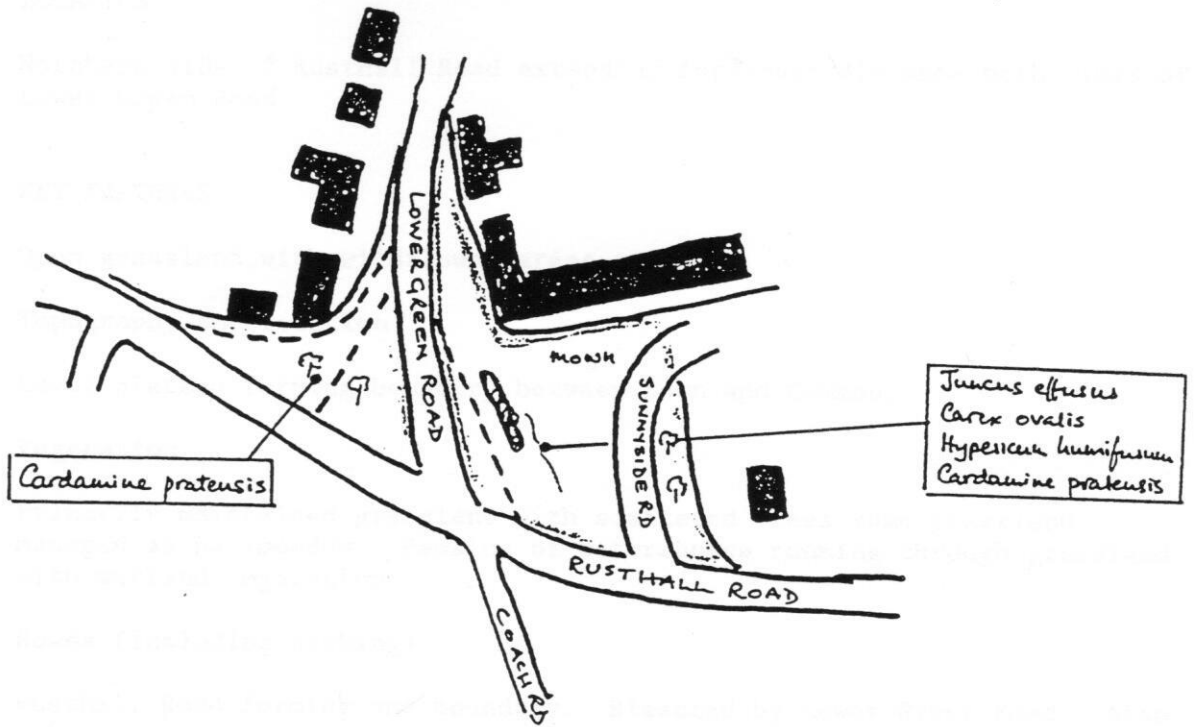
AREA 9



Scale 1:2500

RUSTHALL COMMON

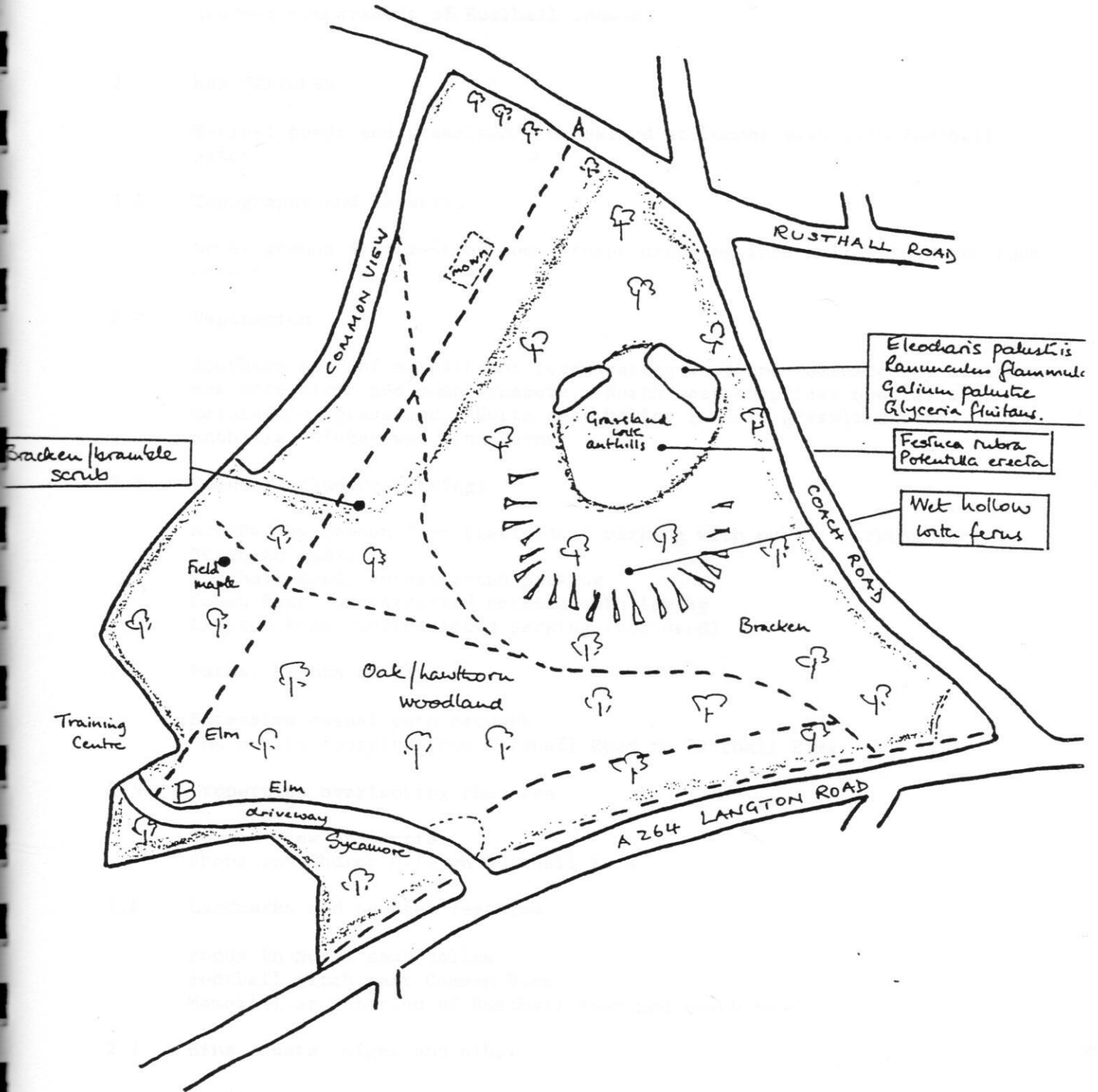
AREA 1



Scale 1:2500

RUSTHALL COMMON

AREA 2

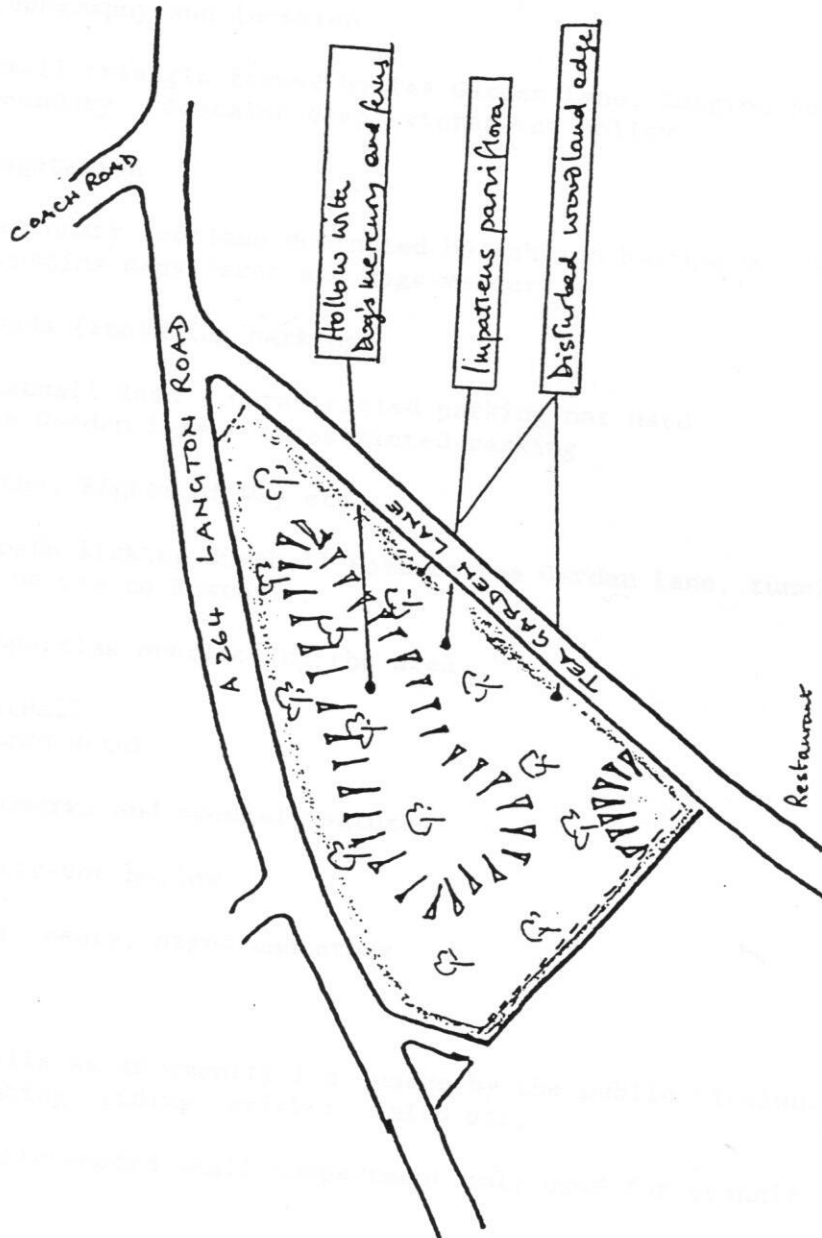


Scale 1:2500

A-B-Path

RUSTHALL COMMON

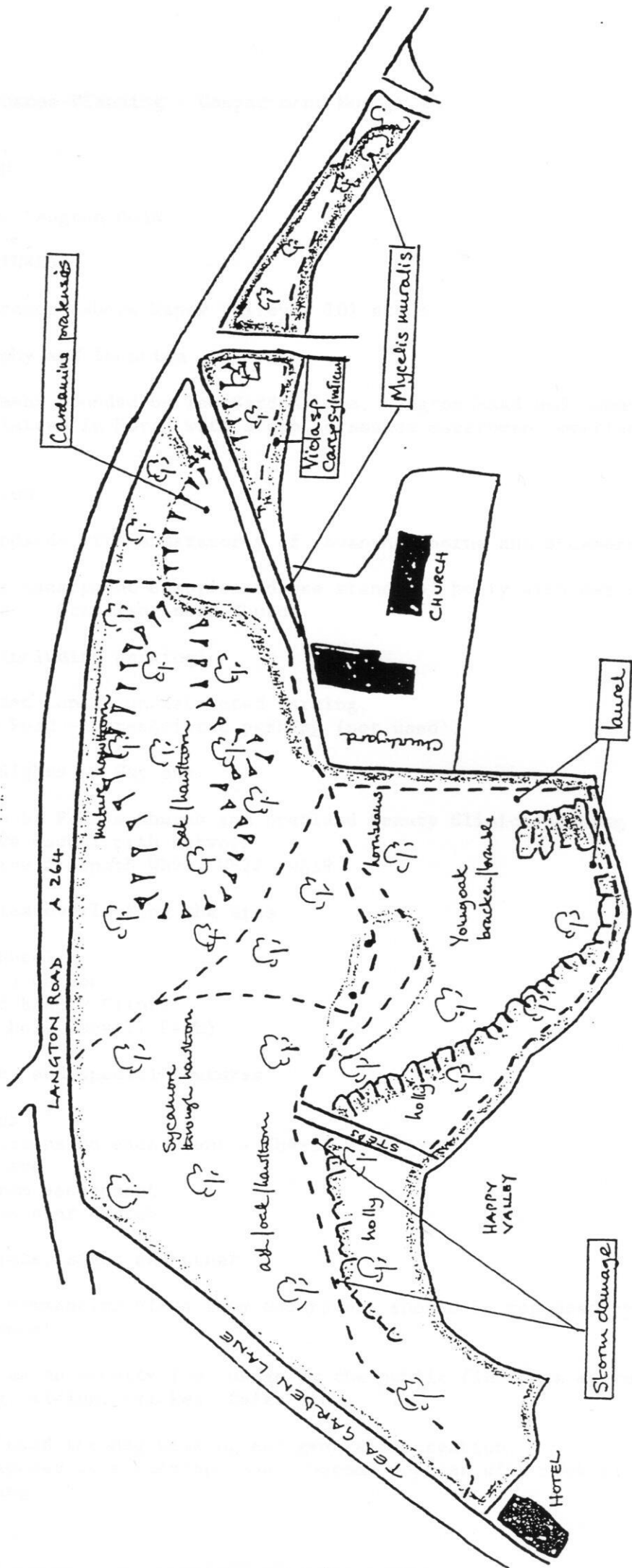
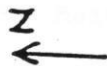
AREA 3



Scale 1:2500

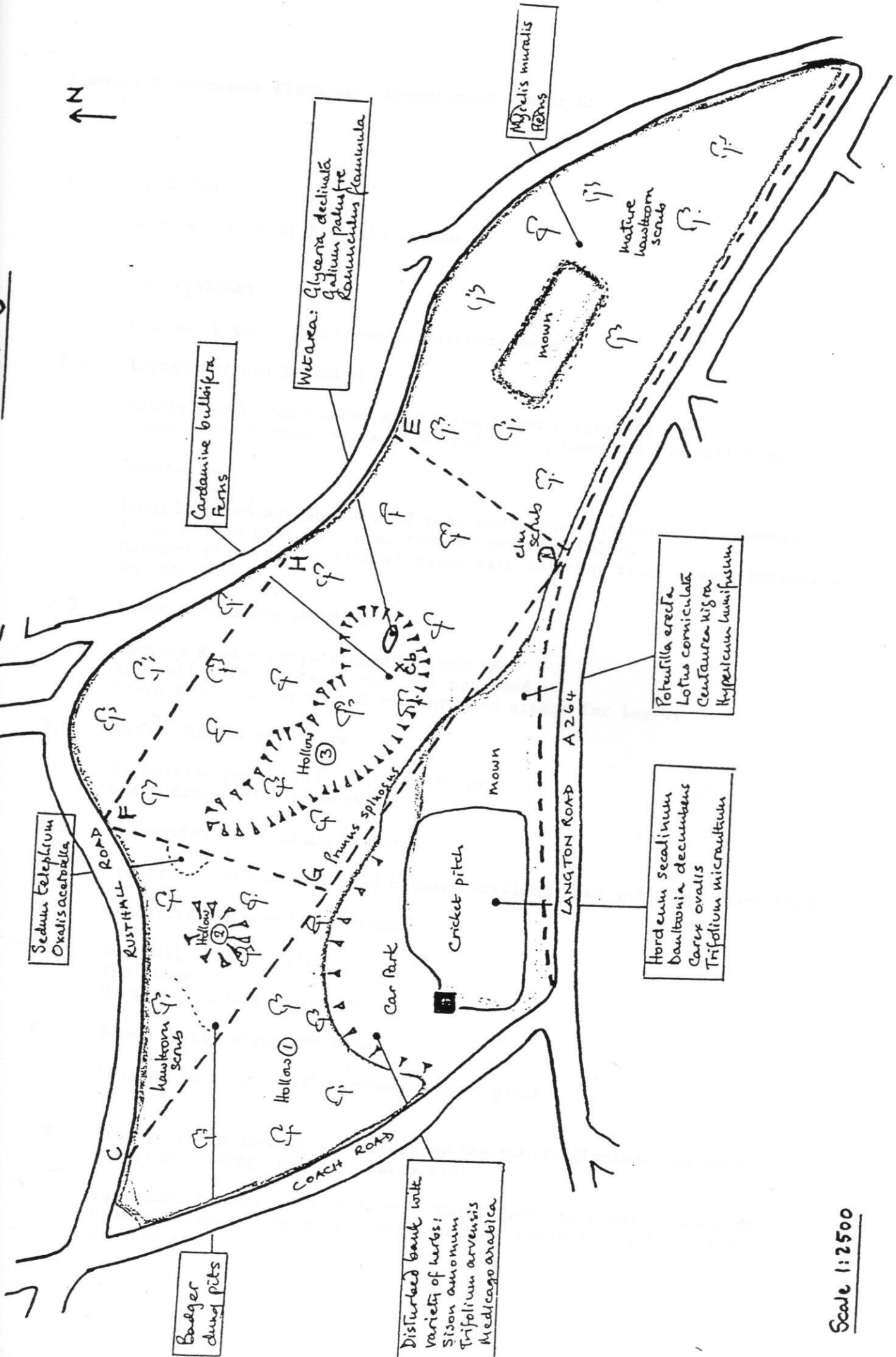
RUSTHALL COMMON

AREA 4



Scale 1:2500

AREA 5



Sedum telephium
Oxalis acetosella

Cardamine bulbifera
Ferns

Wet area: Glyceria declinata
Galium palustre
Ranunculus flammula

Myadalis muralis
Ferns

Potentilla erecta
Lotus corniculata
Centauria nigra
Hypericum humifusum

Hordeum secalinum
Dianthus decumbens
Carex ovalis
Trifolium micranthum

Disturbed bank with
variety of herbs:
Sison amomum
Trifolium arvense
Medicago arabis

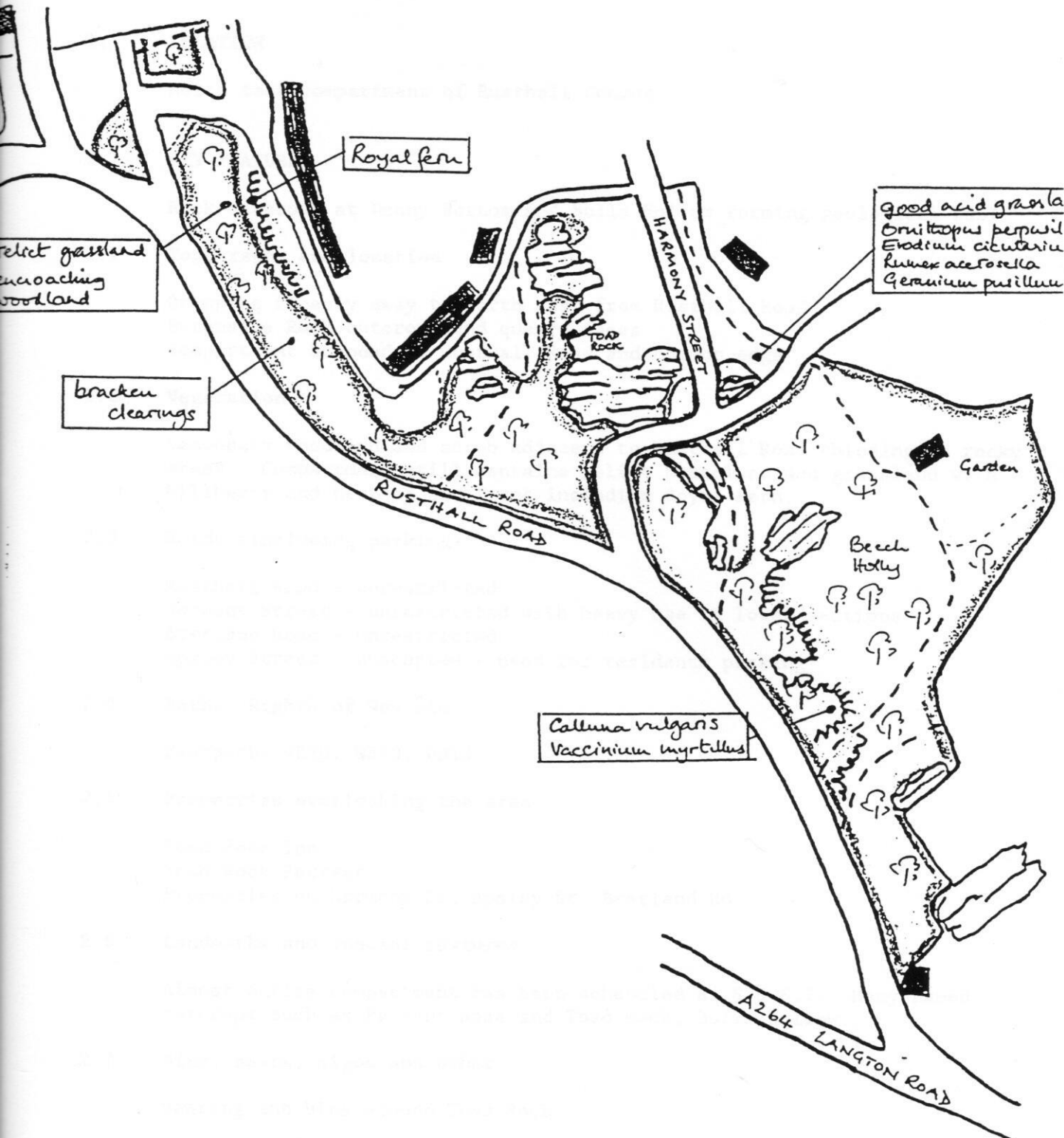
Badger
dung pits

Cb. Cardamine bulbifera

Scale 1:2500

RUSTHALL COMMON

AREA 6



Scale 1:2500